

Delaware Student Assessment Scores Show Progress, While Highlighting Challenges

The 2013 Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System (DCAS) student assessment [results](#) released today show overall progress across a two-year period, while highlighting areas that require the most attention moving forward.

The substantial gains in the percentage of students attaining proficiency in reading last year were sustained, with 72 percent of students scoring proficient as compared to 61 percent in 2011. Math proficiency remains significantly higher than in 2011, when 62 percent of students were proficient, declining slightly by three percentage points, from 73 percent in 2012 to 70 percent this year. The percentage of students who scored advanced in reading increased, and last year's gains in the percentage of students who scored advanced in math were sustained. A higher percentage of students reached their individual yearly growth targets in reading and math compared with last year, increasing from 65 percent to 68 percent in reading and 60 percent to 62 percent in math.

Individual growth targets were developed in 2012, making today the first opportunity to see schools' success in this measure of improving skills among everyone. The state education system has placed significant emphasis on this data to determine schools' progress in educating all students, including whether students who start the year significantly below the proficiency mark get closer to that goal and whether those who reach proficiency in the fall also improve throughout the year. The measures released today show success in this area and support the system's continued focus on growth as a measure of student success.

The state met its overall reading and math goals for all reported subgroups in 2013, with the exception of English language learners and students with disabilities, where the state missed its targets by a narrow margin. Delaware schools remain on track to meet federal progress targets.

“With our fall assessment, we know that the majority of our students are not proficient at the start of the year, and our educators work incredibly hard to help all of their students make academic growth,” Governor Jack Markell said. “We’re excited by the progress we’ve made in the last two years, but we also know that sustainable, structural changes require a substantial long-term commitment to our efforts to raise standards, improve teacher preparation, expand early childhood education and use data to drive decision-making.”

Secretary of Education Mark Murphy added, “We are encouraged to see more students making progress throughout the school year and that much of last year’s considerable improvements in proficiency were sustained over the past year.

“However, a lot of work remains to achieve the more significant gains in proficiency necessary to graduate our students prepared for college and career, particularly among under-served populations,” Murphy said. “And we will continue to rigorously study which instructional practices work best and make them available to teachers throughout our state.”

Note: Any change within a percentage point is considered sustained performance.

The greatest success story may be in middle and high school reading performance, where there were gains of 4-6 percentage points in the percentage of students scoring at the advanced reading level.

“Scoring at the advanced level is an important indicator of college readiness, making these gains particularly encouraging,” Murphy said. “We have no illusions about the

challenge of improving secondary school performance. Our students and educators deserve praise for the hard work that has led to this progress.”

In addition, progress was measured on science scores in grades 3, 5, and 10, and social studies in grades 4 and 7. Social studies proficiency has increased in the last three years, while science proficiency is largely unchanged.

Partnership Zone

The majority of Partnership Zone schools have shown improvement in reading and math since their designation as a PZ school

All four schools in the first cohort of the state’s Partnership Zone (signified with * below) made gains from 2011 (planning year) to 2013 in reading and math. Three of the four showed slight regression in reading performance this year and two showed regression in math. One showed no change. Positive Outcomes Charter School in Camden continued to make great gains in reading: 18 percentage points in reading from 2012 to 2013 and 31 percentage points from 2011 to 2013.

For those in the second cohort, four of the six schools made gains in reading, one regressed and one saw no change. In math, two showed gains, three regressed and one saw no change.

	Reading Percent Proficient				
School	Spring 2011	Spring 2012	Spring 2013	Change 2012-2013	Change 2011-2013
Glasgow High School*	44	60	58	-2	+14
Stubbs Elementary*	12	31	28	-3	+16

Howard High School*	63	76	72	-4	+9
Positive Outcomes Charter*	21	34	52	+18	+31
Bancroft Elem		55	31	-24	
Marbrook Elem		52	54	+2	
Lewis Dual Language Elem		39	49	+10	
Stanton Middle School		52	63	+11	
Dover High School		62	67	+5	
Laurel Middle School		67	67	0	
	Math Percent Proficient				
School	Spring 2011	Spring 2012	Spring 2013	Change 2012-2013	Change 2011-2013
Glasgow High School*	37	60	60	0	+23
Stubbs Elementary*	12	33	34	+1	+22

Howard High School*	65	78	76	-2	+11
Positive Outcomes Charter*	22	35	26	-9	+4
Bancroft Elem		33	26	-7	
Marbrook Elem		47	47	0	
Lewis Dual Language Elem		46	51	+5	
Stanton Middle School		50	52	+2	
Dover High School		61	60	-1	
Laurel Middle School		68	58	-10	

The implications of the results will be more clear in August, when Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) results are released. Because each of the Cohort 1 Partnership Zone schools made its targets in its first year of implementation, those that make their targets in 2013 and/or make their exit targets, no longer will remain in the Partnership Zone.

They will, however, remain Priority Schools under the state's federally approved ESEA plan. They also will be required to fulfill all federal 1003(g) SIG requirements, including

quarterly monitoring by the department's School Turnaround and Title I work groups.

Other assessments

State officials noted that they recognize the state assessment is one measure – and a measure that has changed in recent years as Delaware moved to the computer-adaptive DCAS from the former paper-and-pencil Delaware Student Testing System (DSTP). And it likely will change again in the next two years as the state moves to a test aligned with the Common Core State Standards. Delaware is a governing state in Smarter Balanced, one of two coalitions of states working together to develop a common, CCSS-aligned assessment.

Thus the state also values how Delaware students are performing on national tests, including the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and the SAT college readiness exam, as important indicators for their college and career readiness [This analysis](#) looks at the connection between SAT and DCAS scores).

While Delaware will not receive its 2013 NAEP scores until the fall, today the state also released 2013 SAT results for those juniors who took the exam in April as part of the state-funded, school-day administration of the college readiness exam. Since 2011, the state, using federal Race to the Top grant funds, has paid for every 11th grader in the state to have the opportunity to take the exam during the regular school day.

Overall, scores were on par with last year's results with 19 percent of high school juniors meeting the SAT college readiness benchmark, but several schools saw strong gains. According to the College Board, which administers the national exam, the SAT Benchmark score of 1550 "is associated with a 65 percent probability of obtaining a first-year GPA (Grade Point Average) of a B- or higher, which in turn is associated with a

high likelihood of college success.” Students meeting that benchmark are more likely to enroll in a four-year college, have higher first-year GPAs and are more likely to be retained for their second and third year of college than those who did not attain the benchmark, the College Board reports.

Red Clay Consolidated School District had the strongest overall performance, with 41 percent of juniors meeting benchmark; two of its high schools, Conrad Schools of Science and Dickinson High School, made large gains, improving by 15 and 8 points, respectively, in 2013. Cape Henlopen School District saw the greatest gains: more than 26 percent of Cape Henlopen High School juniors met the benchmark, compared to 17 percent the year prior. And Mount Pleasant High School in Brandywine School District saw 11 point gains, improving from 25 percent to 36 percent in 2013.

“I congratulate these students and educators for their efforts. We must ensure that our students are ready for college and career and work to better prepare them for the rigor and complexity of the work that awaits them after high school,” Murphy said.

Nick Russo, Red Clay Consolidated’s coordinator of SAT programs, credited his district’s success to its efforts to provide students with opportunities “for improving their awareness and personal skills so they can be best prepared for the SAT.”

The district started a 10th grade school day program and a free January evening program with a focus on improving student skills.

“We are continually refining and revising both programs to best meet the needs of our students and expect to see continued growth,” Russo said.

Brandywine Superintendent Mark Holodick thinks numerous

initiatives implemented at Mount Pleasant in recent years contributed to the high school's gains.

"It truly is a school-wide focus involving everyone from the school administration to the teachers and students themselves," he said. "We have focused on critical content areas and subjects, increased rigor in the classroom and set high expectations for all students."